

Message Text

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63

ACTION SS-25

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R 021730Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8965

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4045

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DR

SUBJECT: HEALTH OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER

1. LAST WEEK BRITISH AMB KILLICK DROPPED BY THE OFFICE TO RECOUNT A CONVERSATION HIS WIFE HAD HAD EARLIER IN THE DAY WITH MRS. ANTONIO IBARRA-FORT, WIFE OF A WEALTHY FORMER PHYSICIAN AND BANKER. ACCORDING TO KILLICK, MRS. IBARRA-FORT CONFIDED THAT SHE AND HER HUSBAND HAD LEARNED FROM "UNIMPEACHABLE SOURCES" THAT PRESIDENT BALAGUER WAS QUITE ILL WITH CANCER AND DID NOT HAVE LONG TO LIVE. THEY HAD ATTRIBUTED SUFFICIENT CREDENCE TO THIS INFORMATION THAT THEY HAD STOPPED THE TRANSFER TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC OF A SUBSTANTIAL SUM FROM THEIR BANKERS IN SPAIN WITH WHICH THEY HAD INTENDED TO BUILD AN APARTMENT BUILDING HERE.

2. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN FAIRLY WIDESPREAD NEWSPAPER COMMENT (INCLUDING EDITORIALS) HERE RECENTLY REGARDING THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH, STIMULATED IN PART BY THE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED TWO VISITS TO THE CLINICA PAIEWONSKY (DR PAIEWONSKY IS A RADIOLOGIST) AND IN PART BY THE ENDLESS RUMORS THAT BESET THIS TOWN. DR. IBARRA-FORT IS A WORLDLY, MULTI-LINGUAL GENTLEMAN WHO HAS NOT IMPRESSED ME AS ONE GIVEN TO IMPULSIVE DECISIONS.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, PRESIDENT BALAGUER IS MAINTAINING WITHOUT APPARENT SURCEASE HIS INTENSE SCHEDULE OF TRAVELLING ABOUT THE COUNTRY INAUGURATING JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING IN SIGHT. SINCE KILLICK'S REPORT, WE HAVE DISCREETLY CHECKED WITH A NUMBER OF DOMINICANS WHO ARE FAIRLY CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT. THEY REPORT THAT BALAGUER
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GIVES NO SIGN OF BEING ILL, ALTHOUGH HE IS UNDERSTANDABLY FATIGUED. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT NEITHER MRS. IBARRA-FORT NOR THE "UNIMPEACH-
H-
ABLE SOURCE" SEEMS TO HAVE REPEATED THE STORY, FOR WE WOULD

SURELY HAVE PICKED IT UP INDEPENDENTLY BY NOW.

4. WE ARE NOT NORMALLY GIVEN TO CHASING DOWN RUMORS (HERCULEAN
AND USUALLY PROFITLESS TASK HERE), BUT PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S UNUSUALLY
KEY POSITION AS THE LINCHPIN OF POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC RENDERED IT IMPRUDENT TO DISREGARD THE REPORT. DR.
PAIEWONSKY IS THE BROTHER OF MY HOUSEKEEPER AS WELL AS A GOLFER.
AN OPPORTUNITY MAY PRESENT ITSELF FOR A CASUAL, DISCRAKT
INQUIRY.
HURWITCH

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